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I N V I N T A G E - T I M E .

A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SKETCH.

SOME English folks have a strong prejudice against everything Australian, from tinned mutton to millionaires, and especially against Australian wine. Not without reason at first, perhaps, so far as the wine was concerned, for in starting a new industry there are bound to be mistakes, and the Australian growers had everything to learn ; for rules founded on long experience in the Old World do not always hold good at the antipodes, where so many things go by the rule of contrary. Then, too, the outlay being heavy and the return slow of coming, there was a great temptation to sell the wine before it was fully matured ; hence some of it was 'fortified,' and sweetened with cane-sugar, and doctored in one way or another with no very good result. This penny-wise, pound-foolish plan gave it a bad name, and spoilt the market for those who produced a better quality. The prejudice thus formed was strengthened by the fact that some wine-merchants, knowing the popular taste, sold the better Australian wines as French, and inferior French as Australian. For a while the wine-industry in South Australia flagged and many growers gave it up ; but of late years it has revived : with experience and better appliances, our wine-growers now produce a more even quality, and their wine is rising in the public favour. The export of wine is yearly increasing, new vineyards are being planted, new cellars built, and wine bids fair to take its place with wheat and wool as one of our staples.

One of the features a stranger first notices on arriving in Adelaide as adding materially to the charms of that pretty little town, is the range of hills that rises behind it. You see those hills when first you land a gray semicircle, highest in the middle ; you see them from Adelaide more clearly, each rock and tree showing distinctly in the clear air ; and when you have left the town and its suburbs behind you, you see the vines

upon their lower slopes, for on the foothills of the Mount Lofty range are some of our oldest and best known vineyards. In spring they show as light green patches ; but you can see them more clearly in autumn, when the surrounding herbage is burnt and brown. Now April is the autumn month with us, not that it makes much difference to the native trees, which pay little heed to times and seasons ; the bees are busy in the blossoming gums and amongst the withered sun-baked grass ; some small green blades are peeping ; this, and the fact that the sunlight is a soft golden radiance instead of a blinding white glare, is all we have to remind us that summer is over at last. But in garden and orchard the English trees are flaming with yellow and red ; late apples and quinces are ready for picking ; the last grapes are hanging dead ripe on the vines, and the vintage begun in March is in full swing.

The vintage—what a hackneyed theme it is in song and story, and what stereotyped ideas its name calls up. Vague mental pictures of 'purple grapes' and 'laughing girls,' of 'foaming must'—whatever that may be—and a 'merry set'—it always is a merry set, somehow—who sing and dance as indefatigably as the Quaker in the song ; and a general impression that the vintage is a time of merry-making, its hardest work dancing on the above-mentioned 'foaming must,' which might be rather sticky work, but sounds all right when described by Macaulay. Well, that is not the way they make wine in Australia ; and if any one with such illusions should visit a South Australian wine-cellars in March or April, he would be sadly disappointed. Still, though unpoetic, our vintage may be of interest—at least we find it so, even though it has not to us the charm of novelty ; for one of us cherishes golden recollections of happy holidays spent amongst the long rows of vines in a dear old vineyard—of unrestricted feasting amid acres of luscious fruit—of many a rousing romp in the old wine-cellars, daring trapeze acts on the ropes used for raising casks from the lower cellar ; and awe-struck peeps

into its black depths when the trap-doors were opened—memories that rise up fresh and clear as we walk briskly towards those gold-green foot-hills, where the yellowing vines show up against the sombre tints of the rocky gum-clad range behind them. We are soon in a shady road, with vineyards on either hand; while before us there flaunts a red ensign, giving notice to all whom it may or may not concern that the vintage is in progress here. This looks so picturesques and gay, that, as we pass the cellar which boasts this unusual decoration, we feel inclined to hum—

On the verdant banks of Loire,
It was the vintage-time, &c.

But we soon realise that with the matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon even a vintage is a serious not to say a solemn thing.

First we come to a gang of pickers, not laughing girls with baskets on their heads, but men in unpoetic moleskins, decidedly grubby about the knees with kneeling on the red, clay; and women in shabby dresses and flapping straw hats, carrying kerosene tins with handles like buckets. Yet, in spite of prosaic surroundings, there is a look of rich profusion about the fruit waiting to be carted away—tins of grapes, boxes of grapes, piles of grapes, great mounds of fragrant muscats all golden and brown with ripeness. Following one of the grape-carts, we go through a gateway and up a road, past more vines, on which small black clusters are hiding amongst leaves touched with a purplish crimson. At last we come to a clump of buildings half-way up the rise; carts are passing across the yard with their loads of grapes; while at one side a big van is being loaded with wine for export, so that we see the first and last of the process at one and the same time. Still following the grapes that we have watched so far upon their way, we find ourselves under a veranda at the end of one of the buildings. There are two shoots to receive the grapes and conduct them to the crushers—one is for black and the other for white grapes. At this our cart takes up its stand; a strong-looking young fellow, with a much-dinted wide-awake and a merry face, steps forward, and proceeds to pitchfork our luscious muscats into the shoot with as little ceremony as if they were so many coals. A grinding, squelching sound follows; and we go on to see what becomes of them, just peeping in passing at the genius of the place, a bright, well-cared-for steam-engine, by which the work of grape-crushing is done more quickly and more effectually than by older and more poetic methods. Coming to a brick archway, we find a notice posted on it which bids folks leave behind them, neither hope nor their umbrellas, but—books, newspapers, pamphlets, and political and religious discussions. Perhaps it is feared that the acrimony of argument might sour the wine. Having nothing contraband about us save a sketch-book, and being assured that these rules only apply to employees, we go down one or two steps, and find ourselves in the cellar. It is not a cellar in the strict sense of the word, the floor being only a few feet below the level of the ground, and the roof high and airy, while open windows on every side let in a flood of light and warmth. Experience has proved that wine does not mature so well in a

cold cellar; so they are now discarded, many of the new wine-cellars being two-storey buildings. Passing between rows of tall dark vats, we are soon beside the crushers and in the very thick of the work. Here, wedging ourselves between two large vats, in order to be out of the way, we watch events awhile. The grinding, squelching sound continues, and the crushed grapes fall from a wooden spout into a tub before us, while the stems fly out of a shoot to the left. Men with their sleeves turned up and their canvas aprons stained a dull purple—for they have been crushing black grapes till now—dodge about with buckets; there is a great deal of ladling and pumping, and a general look of stickiness—in short, it puts one in mind of jam-making and washing-day rolled into one. And this is a vintage!

Not to be too minute, the process we watch is as follows: The grapes are passed through rollers, mangled, in fact, the stalks being separated from the berries. The tub into which the crushed berries—now termed 'marc'—fall is so constructed that the juice or 'must' may drain into an outer tub in which the first is set. As the tub fills, it is run off and pumped up into a little tub on wheels, which trundles away with it on a tramway over our heads and tips it into its destined vat. The marc meanwhile is ladled into a vat, where its own weight expresses more of the juice; and lastly it is taken away to the press for a final squeeze. The presses are being opened as we pass out, and disclose what look like blocks of purplish plum-pudding—all that is left of the purple grapes crushed this morning.

So much for this part of the business. As we take a hasty backward look at the cellar we are leaving, it gives us an impression of an elaborate study of perspective done in casks. We cross the yard and enter another cellar, where we see more casks, most of them new, and being tested; for the Customs' authorities will not allow a leaky cask to be shipped away, and sometimes the soundest-looking staves prove porous. These casks are of oak, as are many of the vats; but our guide informs us that native red gum is perhaps better for vats, the wood being harder and the grain closer. Leaving this cellar, which is nearly full of this year's wine, we pass into the next, where we are shown a new vat. It is certainly a notable member of the tub family, this great oak structure that towers above us—its capacity, as we may see by a chalk-mark on its side, is ten thousand seven hundred and twenty-five gallons. Our guide looks at it with affectionate pride, and calls it 'she'—says they are going to put up two more like it shortly. 'Is it full?' we ask. 'Yes; full to the brim,' is the answer. So also, it seems, are dozens of other vats, five thousand gallons and under, the smallest of which looks big enough to drown half-a-dozen Dukes of Clarence comfortably. This is not a pleasant thought—suppose one of them were to burst! Of course they won't; still, it is dark here in the shadow of these tall vats, and the air is heavy; so that we are not sorry when we pass out of this cellar into the next, where the bottling is done. Here we watch the processes of corking, sealing, and affixing capsules, facilitated in each case by some handy labour-saving machine. The corking-machine proceeds

with a lofty disregard of the relative sizes of corks and bottle necks, and will, if required, thrust two or even three full-sized corks into the neck of a small pint bottle. It is made to do so for our benefit, and makes one think of fate remorselessly jamming unhappy mortals into unpleasant positions. With this machine, four men can, we are told, bottle fifty dozen an hour.

Our investigations must end here. We have seen all that is going on at present, though not by any means the whole process of wine-making. The colourless, sweetish fluid we saw in the first cellar has to go through a great deal more before it becomes matured wine worthy of these neat seals and labels. It has to be racked, poor thing, as soon as it has done fermenting, 'racking' being the technical term for pumping it out of one cask or vat into another, in order to get rid of the lees or mud at the bottom. New wine is racked repeatedly during its first year, in order to clear it. Next, for some years it has an uneventful life in those big vats we saw; yet even in its dark prison it does not forget the parent vine, with which it seems to have some strange sympathy, for in spring-time, when the sap rises in the vines, the mud begins to rise in the wine, till by the time the buds are bursting it is quite cloudy, however clear it may have been. The mud soon sinks again, leaving it as clear as before. What with racking, cask-cleaning, and bottling, there is plenty to do in the cellars, even when it is not vintage-time, cleaning the vats being especially disagreeable work, for the carbonic acid generated by fermentation kills instantaneously any one unlucky enough to breathe it. A lighted candle should be lowered into each vat before it is entered. If it burns, well and good; if not, it is not safe to follow. But men are careless, and will neglect even this simple precaution to their own hurt, and deaths have occurred, though not in this neighbourhood, we are glad to learn.

But it is time to be turning homewards; the sun is dipping towards the silver strip of sea that shines beyond the plain at our feet as we take leave of our guide at the cellar door, and the last grape-cart we meet, as we hurry down the vine-fringed road, is gilded into picturesqueness by the sunset light.

THE IVORY GATE.*

BY WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE LESSON OF THE STREET
(continued).

ELSIE's guide stopped to greet a woman whom he knew. She had the usual baby on her arm. She was a sad-faced woman, with some refinement in her looks: she was wretchedly dressed, thin, pale, and dejected.

'The same story?'

'Yes, sir. It's always the same,' she sighed hopelessly. 'But he would work if he could get anything to do. Nobody will employ a man who's had a misfortune. It's hard—because such a thing may happen to anybody. It's like

measles, my husband says. He can't get drunk because there's no money. That's my only comfort.'

He gave her some money, and she passed on her way.

'Her husband was a clerk,' Mr Gray explained, 'who took to drink and robbed his employer. His father was a barrister, who died young. His grandfather was a well-known—almost a great lawyer. I know the whole family history. I learned it'— He stopped for a moment, as if his memory suddenly failed him—'somehow—a long time ago. It is a story which shows how our sins and follies fall upon our own children. This family sprang from the gutter. First, the working man: then his son, the shopkeeper: then his grandson, who became a great lawyer: then his great-grandson, not so great a lawyer. He, you see, is the first of the family who begins life as a gentleman and is brought up among gentlemen: he inherited money: he had a practice: he married in the class called gentle, and had children. But he lost all his money and in despair he killed himself. Cousinly affection is a cold thing at best. It helped the widow to a pittance, and sent her boys to a cheap school. At fifteen they had to take whatever employment they could get. Observe that this branch of the family was now going down-hill very fast. The future of a boy who has been taught no trade and has entered no profession is black indeed. One of the boys went out to New Zealand, which has little to give a friendless boy: another enlisted, served three years, and has never got any work since. I believe he carries boards about the street. Another became a tenth-rate actor, and now starves on fifteen shillings a week, paid irregularly. Another—the youngest—was put into a merchant's office. He rose to a hundred and twenty pounds a year: he married a girl of the clerky class—that woman you saw: he took to drink: he embezzled his master's money: he went to prison: he is now hopelessly ruined. He cannot get any lower in the social scale. What will his children do? They have no friends. They will grow up like the children around them: they will join the hopeless casuals: they will be hewers of wood. Property, my child, Property—has done this. He stole. In our society nobody will be tempted to steal. He drank—with us he would be kept judiciously under control until he could be trusted again. That would be the care of the State. He is another victim of Property. When his grandfather was framing Acts of Parliament for the protection of Property, he did not dream that he was making another engine for the oppression of his grandchildren.'

Said the other Voice: 'We rise by our virtues. We sink by our vices. Let these people suffer. Their sufferings should make the rest of us wiser. Teach the children to rise again as their great-grandfather rose. Do not contend against the great Law which metes out suffering in return for vice.'

'Those,' continued the Socialist Professor, 'who do most to make a few men rich are the real enemies of what they suppose themselves to be defending. Given a thousand women sweated for one man, and there presently arises indignation either among the women or among the

bystanders. From indignation we get revolution, because the employer never gives way. He cannot. He would lose, if he did, his wealth, which is his Heaven. If you divide the thousand women into companies of ten, each company under its own sweater, and all the sweaters under other sweaters, you make a hierarchy of sweaters, culminating in one at the top. That was the old state of things. The man at the top was a Chief, a Patriarch: he knew his people: he sweated them, but kindly: he tossed them crumbs: he looked after the sick and the old. Now all this is changing. The old family tie—such as it was—is dissolved. The man at the top has disappeared: a Board of Directors has taken his place: there is nothing left but the Board and its employees. The men who work are no longer interested in the business of the firm, except so far as their pay is concerned. Their pay will go up, and the dividends will go down. And with every increase of wages so much Property is destroyed. Let everything—everything—be turned into Companies to help the destruction of Property.'

Said the other Voice: 'Property is strengthened by being diffused. Companies organise labour: they give capital its proper power: they are not easily intimidated: they interest all who can save anything. Let us turn into companies every industrial and distributive business in the country.'

'All times of change,' the Master went on 'are times of interest. We are living at a time when great changes are impending—the greatest changes possible. Before great changes there is always a period of unconscious preparation. The minds of people are being trained. Without any perception of the fact, old ideas are dying out and new ones are coming into existence. When the Revolution actually arrives, everybody is ready for it and nobody is surprised. It was so with the Reformation. For a hundred years and more the idea of the Great Revolt had been slowly growing in men's minds. When it came at last, there was no surprise and there were few regrets. For a hundred years and more the ideas of the French Revolution had been talked about by philosophers: these ideas sank down among the people. Nobody was surprised, not even the nobles themselves, when the end came. So with our Revolution. It is coming—it is coming—its ideas are no longer timidly advanced—here and there—by a fanatic here or a philosopher there: they are lying in the hearts of the people ready to spur them into action: they are helping on the cause by successive steps, every one of which means nothing less than the abolition of Property. These things are new to you, child. You were only born yesterday or the day before. I was born a hundred years ago or thereabouts. Consider again'—he leaned against a lamp-post for greater ease, and discoursed as one addressing an audience—'Consider, I say, this great question of companies and their results. Formerly, one man made things which he took to market—sold or exchanged, and went home again. He, by himself, did everything. Then one man made, and another man sold. The next improvement was for twenty men to work, for one to receive and to collect their work, and for another to sell it. In this way the twenty remained poor, and

the two became rich. So they went on, and trade flourished, and the twenty producers more and more fell into the power of the two, who were now very rich and strong. Now the merchants are forming themselves into companies, and the companies are amalgamating with each other, and the small people may contemplate ruin. For these—now merchants, shopkeepers, manufacturers, workmen—there will be nothing but service in the companies; no possibility of acquiring Property, nothing but service all their lives. Now do you see how that helps the cause? They will become accustomed to work, but not for themselves: they will grow accustomed to work for a bare living and no more: they won't like either: but they will ask why the second should go with the first: the two great obstacles to Socialism will be removed. Then, either the step I spoke of just now—the abolition of the dividends—or which is just as likely, a revolution, when the servants of the companies shall make the State take over all and work them for the good of all. Some there are who think that the workman will have hope and power for union crushed out of him. I think not; but if so—woe to the rich! The Jacquerie and the French Revolution will be spoken of as mild ebullitions of popular feeling compared with what will happen then. But I think not. I do not believe that the working man will sink again. He has got up so far. But he needs must climb higher.'

'You think it would be impossible'—by this time a small crowd had got round them, but the speaker still addressed his disciple as if no one else at all was listening—'for the State to take over the great producing and distributing companies. But it has been done already. The State has the Post and the Telegraph Services. They will deal with railways, steamers, coaches, cabs, omnibuses, trams, canals, water, gas, electric light, breweries, bakeries, factories, shops, just as they have dealt with these two. The State can take it all. The State will take the management of all. But, you say, the shares of the company will become Funds. They will, and the Funds will pay interest—but the interest will become rapidly lower and lower, so that what was once five per cent. is now but two and a half, and before long shall be two—one and a half—one—and nothing at all. There will be no cry of spoliation, because the holders of stock will be forced gradually into looking more and more to their own efforts, and because widows and sick people and old people, to whom the stocks were once so useful, will be all provided for by the State as a matter of right, and without any of the old humiliation of pauperdom. Pauper? Oh, heavenly word! Child, in the world of the future—the world which you will help to mould, we shall all be paupers—every one.'

He spoke with fine enthusiasm, his face lit up, his eyes bright. The girl was almost carried away, until the other Voice began coldly and judicially:

'Nothing is so good for man as to be ruled and kept in discipline, service, and subjection. It is a foolish and a mischievous dream which supposes all men eager for advance. The mass of mankind asks for no advancement. It loves nothing and desires nothing but the gratification

of the animal. Give it plenty of animalism and it is satisfied. That condition of society which keeps the mass down and provides for the rise of the ambitious few is the only condition which is reasonable and stable. Base your social order on the inertness of the mass. Make the workman do a good day's work: pay him enough, so that he shall have some of the comforts he desires: educate the clever boy and make him foreman, head-man, manager, or artist, journalist, dramatist, novelist. Give him the taste for wealth. Let him have some. Then he, too, will be ready to fight if necessary in the army of order.'

While the other Voice was speaking, there came slouching around the corner into the street where he held the fifth—perhaps the tenth part of a room, a really excellent specimen of the common or London thief, the habitual criminal. He was a young man—the habitual criminal is generally young, because in middle and elderly life he is doing long sentences—he had a furtive look, such as that with which the jackal sallies forth on nocturnal adventures: he had a short slight figure, a stooping and slouching gait, and narrow shoulders. His eyes were bright, but too close together: his mouth was too large and his jowl too heavy: his face was pale, his hair was still short, though growing rapidly: his hands were pendulous: his round hat was too big for his little head: he wore a long loose overcoat. His face, his figure, his look proclaimed aloud what he was.

He stopped at the corner and looked at the little crowd. Everybody, for different reasons, is attracted by a crowd. Professionals sometimes find in crowds golden opportunities. This crowd, however, was already dispersing. The speaker had stopped. Perhaps they had heard other and more fervid orators on the Socialist side. Perhaps they were not in the least interested in the subject. You see, it is very difficult to get the hand-to-mouth class interested in anything except those two organs.

'This street,' said the Master, observing him with professional interest, 'is full—really full—of wealth for the observer. Here is a case now—an instructive though a common case.' The fellow was, turning away disappointed, perhaps, at the melting of the crowd and any little hope he might have based upon their pockets. 'My friend?'—he heard himself called, and looked round suspiciously—'you would like, perhaps, to earn a shilling honestly, for once.'

He turned slowly: at the sight of the coin held up before him, his sharp eyes darted right and left to see what chance there might be of a grab and a bolt. Apparently, he decided against this method of earning the shilling. 'What for?' he asked.

'By answering a few questions. Where were you born?'

'I dunno.'

'Where were you brought up? Here?—In this street? Very well. You went to school with the other children: you were taught certain subjects up to a certain standard. What trade were you taught?'

'I wasn't taught no trade.'

'Your father was, I believe, a thief?'—The lad nodded.—'And your mother too?'—He nodded again, and grinned.—'And you yourself and your

brothers and sisters are all in the same line, I suppose?'—He nodded and grinned again.—'Here is your shilling.' The fellow took it, and shambled away.

'Father—mother—the whole family, live by stealing. Where there is no Property there can be no theft. In our world, such a creature would be impossible. He could not be born: such parents as his could not exist with us: he could not be developed: there would be no surroundings that would make such a development possible. He would be what, I believe, men of science call a Sport: he would be a deformity. We should put him in a hospital and keep him there until he died.'

'In that world,' said the other Voice, 'there would be deformities of even a worse kind than this—the deformities of hypocrisy and shams. By a thousand shifts and lies and dishonesties the work of the world would be shifted on the shoulders of the weak. The strong man has always used his strength to make the weak man work for him, and he always will. The destruction of Property would be followed by the birth of Property on the very self-same day. There is the power of creation—of invention—which is also a kind of Property. Laws cannot destroy that power. Laws cannot make men industrious. Laws cannot make the strong man work for the weak. Laws cannot prevent the clever man from taking advantage of the stupid man. When all the failures—all the deformities—have been killed off, the able man will still prey upon the dull-witted. Better let the poor wretch live out his miserable life, driven from prison to prison, an example for all the world to see.'

It was at this point that Elsie discovered the loss of her purse. Her pocket had been picked by one of the intelligent listeners in the crowd. She cried out on finding what had happened, in the unphilosophic surprise and indignation with which this quite common accident is always received.

'Child,' said the Master, 'when there is no longer any Property, money will vanish: there will be no purses: even the pocket will disappear, because there will no longer be any use for a pocket.—Did the purse contain much? Suppose you had nothing to lose and nothing to gain. Think of the lightness of heart, the sunshine on all faces, which would follow. I fear you are rich, child. I have observed little signs about you which denote riches. Your gloves are neat and good: your dress seems costly. Better far if you had nothing.'

'Master, if I were like that girl on the other side, would you like me better? Could I be more useful to the cause if I dressed like her?'

The girl was of the common type—they really do seem, at first, all alike—who had on an ulster and a hat with a feather and broken boots.

'If I were like her,' Elsie went on, 'I should be ignorant—and obliged to give the whole day to work, so that I should be useless to you—and my manners would be rough and my language coarse. It is because I am not poor that I am what I am. The day for poverty is not come yet, dear Master.'

'In the future, dear child, there shall be no poverty and no riches. To have nothing will be the common lot. To have all will be the common

inheritance. Oh! there will be differences: men shall be as unlike then as now: we shall not all desire the same things. You and such as you will desire Art of every kind. You shall have what you desire. In our world, as in this, like will to like. You shall have the use for yourselves of pictures, of musical instruments, of everything that you want. The rest of the world will not want these things. If they do, more can be made. You shall have dainty food—the rest of the world will always like coarse and common fare. Think not that we shall level up or level down. All will be left to rise or to sink. Only they shall not starve, they shall not thieve, they shall not be sweated. Oh! I know they paint our society as attempts to make all equal. And they think that we expect men no longer to desire the good things in the world. They will desire them—they will hunger after them—but there will be enough for all. The man who is contented with a dinner of herbs may go to a Carthusian convent, which is his place, for we shall have no place for him in a world which recognises all good gifts and assigns to every man his share.'

Then spoke the other Voice, but sadly: 'Dreams! Dreams! There are not enough of the good things to go round—good things would become less instead of more. Without the spur there is no work. Without the desire of creating Property, all that is worth anything in life will perish—all but the things that are lowest and the meanest and the commonest. Men will not work unless they must. By necessity alone can the finest work be ordered and executed. As men have been, so will men always be. The thing that hath been, that shall be again.'

'You have learned some of the lessons of Poverty Lane, Scholar,' said the Master.—'Let us now go home.'

HOW WE SAW THE BAHAMA CABLE.

BRIGHT and warm as usual, although the middle of January, was the day in those sun-loved isles, the Bahamas. Blue, as usual, was the sky above; blue, also, the waters around. A slight breeze was blowing, which, on sea, raised here and there little curling breakers; and on land stirred gently the drooping, graceful heads of the palms and cocoa-nut trees. Heedless and unconcerned were the elements as to why that strange large steamer was lying off the bar of Nassau harbour. Not so, however, were the inhabitants of the little colonial town which has the honour of being the capital of the Bahamas. Great and deep interest did they take in that boat. For did she not bear their long-looked-for and long-hoped-for Cable, that mysterious and wonderful link of connection which was at last to join them to the outside world? The pros and cons of obtaining one had been discussed and weighed for several years; but now all difficulties had been overcome—the cable was to be established. Its advent had been eagerly looked for; great hopes had been formed of the blessings it would bring to the colony: how it would improve trade and open up business connections; what a number of fresh American visitors it would probably allure for the winter months, visitors, who, though keenly enjoying the delightful, health-giving

climate during those months, do not care to be cut off from all possible outside communication except by the fortnightly mail; and, in fact, how in every way it would increase the prosperity of the place. From the moment the smoke of the steamer had appeared above the horizon, and the signal flag on the fort had proclaimed what she was, many had hurried to their seaward-looking verandas and watched her plough her way surely and steadily to Nassau. She was to stay three or four days, get her shore-end laid here, and then depart for Jupiter—not the planet, for she had neither wings nor aerial apparatus, and the islanders did not yet aspire to hold telegraphic communication with unknown beings in the stars, but were contented at present merely to be more closely connected with this prosaic earth and ordinary fellow-creatures. The Jupiter our cable boat—by name the *Westmeath*—was bound for a little town on the coast of Florida where a permit had been granted to lay the cable.

We must go across the harbour, beyond the bar, and board the ship to see the wonderful cable. A party is arranged; the boat to take us is lying at the wharf; the different individuals stroll up by twos and threes till the number is complete, the early ones rather fuming and impatient, thereby making themselves all the hotter, for, though the middle of January, it is indeed scorchingly hot upon the low-lying unsheltered wharf. The sun beats down on our devoted heads, and no breath of breeze comes to fan us from the calm waters of the harbour, shut in as it is and naturally formed by a long-stretching island, named, for no apparent reason, 'Hog Island.' At last we are all on board our little sailing-boat, longing to get out on the open sea. The boat we have to-day, though off duty for the present, is ordinarily a sponger; and very dangerous her decks must be to the poor spongers if sea or weather is at all rough. She has no bulwarks; the roof and walls of the cabin rising about three feet from the deck fill the centre of the boat; and round this run her narrow and utterly unprotected decks. However, it is calm enough this morning; so we seat ourselves comfortably on the aforesaid roof in the generous shade of her mainsail. There are about ten of us, one American, all the rest English. Clerics predominate. Ah! it is nice to be comfortably lolling in the shade like this, after the hurry down to the wharf. But alas! the boom against which so many are confidently reclining begins ominously to move, and threatens to clean sweep all off the cabin roof into the water, which lies so still and transparently clear below. Not desiring a ducking just now, inviting though the water appears, we get up hurriedly. Orders are given for all to go below till the sails are fixed up and the boat fairly started. Into that stuffy cabin this hot day! I linger behind, politely allowing others to pass down first; and find, when all but one or two equally lothful ones are in, that there is no room for me, so stay on deck and watch operations.

Soon the boat begins to move, carried by the tide, I suppose, for there seems scarcely a breath of wind; but 'we shall be getting a nice breeze when we are off a bit,' says the dusky sailor, and I trust him. We certainly do sometimes get clear of that melting wharf and slowly

begin to cross the harbour. Oh the exquisite blueness of that sea—what a glorious colour it is! I look down through the lucid depths, clearly seeing the bottom, and watch the innumerable and many-coloured little fish dart among the flowing sea-weeds and coral-formed rocks. How clear and cool it looks down there; how nice to be a nymph or some other amphibious creature on a hot day! Suddenly, 'A shark!' calls out the sailor. In an instant I am by his side; and there, not ten yards from us, see for the first time that dreaded terror of fish and man lazily and unconcernedly paddling past our boat. 'He is near upon eighteen feet long,' says the sailor. I shudder, and feel glad, after all, I am not a nymph, &c.; for I have no desire to become part of a shark. It is more comfortable to be safe above his reach, even though seated on a blistering deck, where you can feel a superior contempt for him, which perhaps would not come so readily at closer quarters.

But now the promised breeze is filling our sails, and all are again on deck. The discomforts of heat are forgotten as we feel the delicious breath of the dear old Atlantic on our faces, as it meets us straight from the ocean beyond the bar. We soon clear the half-mile of harbour, safely cross the bar, not without a good deal of lurching on the part of our ship; for on the calmest days a swell is there; and after a few more detours reach the *Westmeath*, our goal. How massive and inaccessible her ironclad sides appear, towering so far above our humble little decks. Nothing but a break-neck-looking spiral staircase can be seen whereby to enter. But the Westmeathians soon hail us, and orders are apparently given to lower a gangway, for a safe and inviting stairway is swung down before our eyes, making an easy and comfortable ascent for ladies as well as gentlemen. How delightful it is to be on board a really big steamer once more. Although looked down on by ocean liners as 'only a tramp,' the officers inform us she is by no means small; and to us, who have been forced to brave the sea in little sailing-boats or a small interinsular steamer, she seems deliciously spacious and so strong and powerful. At first we run about her, exploring with almost childish glee, thinking for a time, I imagine, more about the boat itself than her precious freight we had come to see. Her decks seem so broad and long, and how high up we feel above the water! We lean over the bulwarks of her seaward side, looking down at the water, which seems so far below, and imagine that we have all just come on board bound for England and home. For does not the dear old country lie away out there, across that blue expanse, and is it not natural that 'our lingering hearts will turn, beloved home, to thee,' and that memories of happy moments gone again crowd freshly on us! I, who have been out but a few months, feel this; while some of these have not seen their native land for years. Our eyes wander dreamily over the restless waters and little curling white breakers to the far-distant horizon. When shall we really cross it again? What are those we love, on far-distant shores, doing now? What changes is Time working?

But we have come on board to see the cable and not to dream. The officers and electricians are most genial and kind. They have welcomed

us from the first moment with true British frankness, evidently as really glad to see us as we are to exchange greetings with fellow-countrymen from over the water; for it is delightful to meet and talk to fresh Englishmen again. They have come direct from London, have not even stopped at New York, as ordinary travellers to these indirect islands have to. They can give us the very latest news, that of a fortnight old being new to us, having at that time no telegraphic communication. They were in London on Christmas eve, the boat compelled to remain in the docks all Christmas day, a most fearful and pitiless fog harassing all movement. 'With the greatest difficulty we found our boat,' some of them murmur; 'the fog hung over the city like a death-pall.'

We shudder, and congratulate ourselves on our sunny skies and genial warmth. The whole week before they had had glorious skating. Pangs of deep envy dart through us as we think of our never-ending summer. We stand thus, high up on the bridge, some time talking, the delicious fresh breeze fanning and invigorating us, and the blue sea, blue sky, and bright sun beautifying everything. But in spite of the fascinating interest which this sort of conversation has, we leave it for a while, and descend on deck now at last, really to view the cable. We are guided through a rather dirty passage, on one side of which are penned some fine broad-shouldered sheep, which look happy and comfortable and as if sea-life agreed with them. These animals must have been a source of wonder to any native Bahamians who have not seen an English sheep, the native sheep being miserable objects of skin and bone, almost woolless, and when converted into mutton giving Herculean labours to the teeth and jaws.

Soon we come to the open decks again, and there yawn the immense tanks which hold the two hundred and fifty miles of cable. We peep down. At first, in those dark depths which reach to the hold, we dimly see water surging up and down. It startles you at first, making you have the uncomfortable feeling that the ship has sprung a gigantic leak. But soon the eyes get accustomed to the light, and easily distinguish the mighty cable lying coiled up, still and lifeless, with foamy, dirty-looking water surging to and fro over it with the swing of the boat; for the cable must be kept in water. Lifeless indeed it lies, and yet we look down upon the wondrous work with almost feelings of awe; for is it not to be filled with that mysterious electrical life which will enable it in a moment of time to carry a message thousands of miles! What we are utterly unable to do, this now lifeless coil is to accomplish for us. I almost feel that it may rise from its watery couch and sweep us puny mortals from the deck.

But I want to see and examine it closer: one has not a chance of viewing a submarine cable every day, and I had not seen one before. So one of the electricians takes me down to the electrical room. Very bright, burnished, and mysterious-looking are the brass fittings, stops, and the rest of the electrical paraphernalia. Rows and rows of jars filled with chemicals line the walls, giving the place the appearance of a storeroom for jams. Pieces of cable in different stages of completion are lying about. Here is

the medium which carries the electrical fluid, a twisted rope of seven copper wires encased in a coating of gutta-percha. Here it is in its second stage, the gutta-percha core again encased in flax surrounded by steel wire. And here it is completed with protective covering of tarred hemp. How carefully thus is the copper wire protected and insulated!

There is more to be seen yet of the wonderful inventions of man. So we go up again, examine the paying-out machinery at her bows, which has now been brought to such necessary perfection; for cables have often been injured by imperfect appliances for paying-out. Close by is the latest invention for taking soundings. I do not of course understand exactly the hieroglyphics on its dial or the lightning movements of the needle; but the engineers say it is a wonderful and beautiful piece of machinery, saving infinite trouble. It certainly looks ingenious; and if it saves trouble, must of course be all right.

Having seen all there is to be seen of the cable, we still linger a little while. The Englishmen have secured treasures and trophies of these western shores to take back with them, and are anxious to know if we think they have made good bargains. We see two large turtles which would have delighted the heart of a City alderman, lying in one corner of the deck, aimlessly wagging their heads and feebly moving their flabby fins. The happy owner is going to try to take them back to England alive. He will very probably succeed; for they keep alive for weeks if a little sea-water is dashed on their heads now and again. The proud possessor of a pink pearl shows us his treasure, yielded, he tells us, after beating down an enormous price, 'for an old coat.' The Bahamas have sometimes been called 'the land of the pink pearl.' They are obtained from the conch-shells found on these shores, and are frequently of great value and exceeding beauty. This one is very small, but quite worth the price given, I should think. Another sunburnt young Englishman has invested in sponges, which are plentiful enough in these parts. You can often buy enough for a few shillings to last a lifetime. He shows an immense one which would almost fill an ordinary bath, and when saturated with water, would require a Goliath to wield. From the stern of the boat is dangling an immense chain, baited with an enormous piece of meat, to tempt sharks. But they have up till now proved shy of the boat, probably because as soon as one was caught sight of anywhere near, he was instantly popped at with pistols; and not appreciating such a welcome to his meal, usually decamped swiftly. They did, however, manage to land one great fellow before the boat finally departed.

But now we really have to go; and much indeed have we enjoyed the visit, for the Westmeathians have been very good and hospitable to us. We, perhaps reluctantly, descend the gangway; our imaginary journey is over, and yet we are back in the same place! We again place ourselves about our insignificant little boat. Again we look up the towering sides of the big ship, seeing the pleasant sunburnt faces of the Englishmen looking down on us from her bulwarks; the breeze begins to rustle our sails; we are soon a little way from the boat; the separate

figures grow a little indistinct. But they are shouting out something to us. What is it? 'Oh, a camera on board. They want to photograph us.' Almost unconsciously, hair is smoothed, hats set straight. The cap is off; we are taken. We learnt afterwards that in the hurry and excitement they had forgotten to put a plate in, so the galaxy of beauty will not be handed down to posterity. We are receding farther and farther from the *Westmeath*. We hear the reports caused by futile attempts to 'pot' sharks getting fainter and fainter. Soon we are again tossing over the bar. Our visit to the cable is ended.

We shall never see it again. For when the *Westmeath* returns from Jupiter, for a few days, to join up and connect our shore-end, the cable we have just viewed will be paid out and uncoiled, stretching its immense length right across from the coast of Florida; resting quietly hundreds of fathoms down in the wonderful world of the deep blue sea, quietly and unobserved doing its duty. What thousands of messages will soon flash through its serious body! What secrets now will be entrusted to it! But secrets are safe with the silent cable. It will not betray them, not even to the fishes which will play about it, at first, perhaps, with a curious wonder; not even to the shellfish and other parasites which will cling and cleave to it. No difference will it make to the mighty cable whether it is to convey a message to our own most gracious Sovereign or the humblest peasant in the land; to the richest Croesus or the poorest beggar. It will carry all equally well—the greatest State secret, the simple message of love; tragic messages, flippant messages; messages of danger, death, or awful catastrophe; messages of joyful home-comings; prosaic business messages from one merchant to another; messages for evil, messages for good. It will carry them all unquestioningly, uncomplainingly, doing its duty. Will it improve, ennoble, enrich our little colony? Will it fulfil the hopes that have been formed? Time will show.

THE BELLS OF LINLAVEN.

CHAPTER IV.—ALARUM.

A FEW days before this, the Vicar's son, Captain Norham, arrived at Linlaven. He had been on sick-leave for some months. The wound which he had received at Tel-el-Kebir was quite healed, but his general health had been injuriously affected by the severities of the campaign. Clara had joined him when in February he landed at Southampton; and as he was too ill to proceed northwards at once, they had together passed the early spring months in the Isle of Wight. Nor would he have been at Linlaven now, but for the circumstance that he had been hurriedly summoned home. This was in consequence of a letter from Mr Brookes, who has been already spoken of as the family lawyer to the late Squire Norham of Brathrig Hall, and who still acted in that capacity for the Squire's widow. Mr Brookes' letter had intimated to Captain Norham and his wife that the old lady at the Hall, having heard of the gallantry which had distinguished the Captain's conduct in the Eastern campaign, had evidently relented

somewhat of her former severity and bitterness against the daughter of her lost son Arthur, and was apparently disposed to alter the will by which she had conveyed her wealth away from her natural heir and given it to an alien. But before doing anything, she wished to have an interview with her grandchild Clara and her husband ; hence Mr Brookes desired that they should come north at once.

Alas for the hazards of a repentance that awakens not the conscience till the eleventh hour ! The day before the arrival of the Captain and his wife, the old lady had a stroke of paralysis, from which her physicians had pronounced it impossible that she should recover. And so passed all hope of her being able to rectify the injustice she had already done.

The aged Vicar's joy at once more receiving his gallant boy under his roof was consequently not unmixed with sadness. Nor was George himself much more cheerful. It is true that the sight once more of the little girl and boy who called him father, filled his heart with pleasure and gratitude ; but in the background sat black Care distilling pain. Shattered in health, and poor in estate, he could not help reflecting with ominous feelings upon what the future might have in store for his wife and children.

The conversation which we have above recorded between Uncle Giles and Mrs Dale as to the evident premeditated departure of the former took place on a Friday evening. On the following day Captain Norham, in the course of an afternoon stroll, and wearied somewhat and fatigued with the heat and glare of the summer sun, walked across the graveyard and entered the church, the doors of which stood open. It was to him a more than usually sacred place, for here was the pew in which he had sat from infancy to manhood, side by side with the mother who had long since passed into the higher sanctuary behind the veil, and side by side also with her who had been the true love of his youth and was now the mother of his children.

Inside the church, all was calm and peaceful. The sun shone bright and hot on the old stained-glass windows, but soft and cool were the purple shadows within the ancient aisles. He sat down in the vicarage pew, and gave himself up to pleasant reveries of the past. He heard the hum of bees about the windows, and saw the green branches swaying beyond the open door. Whether, lulled into restfulness by the calm and stillness of the holy place, he fell asleep, or not, he could not tell, but once more he heard the bells toll out in the church-tower, and he experienced once again all he had seen and heard in that far-away dream of his sick couch at Cairo. He saw the same shadowy figure walk down the aisle, saw the man halt before the tomb of the Norhams, heard again the accents of grief and dejection with which he uttered the words : ' *He—gone ; and I—unforgiven.*' Thereupon followed a sudden noise, which woke him to consciousness.

The noise was caused by the slamming of one of the church doors, as if thrown-to by a draught ; but this time it was not all a dream. There was some one in the church. The tall figure of an aged man, white-haired and slightly stooping, was approaching softly down the aisle. The Captain

withdrew himself noiselessly within the shelter of a curtain at the end of the pew, whence he could see without being seen. The man walked slowly forward, looking from side to side like one who had simply come thither from a feeling of curiosity, and with no special purpose. By-and-by he reached the tomb of the Norhams, with its white marble effigies and golden emblazonments. Something here seemed to attract the man's attention. It was the arms of the family cut upon a shield surmounting the tombstone. He looked at it for few seconds in a kind of wonder, as if it recalled something to his memory. Then, putting his hand into his breast, he drew out a small leather case, from which he extracted a paper, and seemed for a moment to be comparing something on the paper with what he saw cut upon the shield.

The effect upon the man was strange—almost startling. He grew suddenly pale, as if some unexpected revelation had burst upon him ; and with the cry of ' My God ! what be this ? ' turned, and fled from the church.

Captain Norham sat for a few minutes in amazement. What did this mean ? What could this repetition of his dream, followed by the appearance and attitude of this stranger, portend ?

Quitting the church, he was in a few seconds at the vicarage.

' Clara,' he said to his wife, ' I thought I knew everybody in the village. But to-day I have seen a tall old man, with white hair, whom I feel sure I never saw before.'

' Why, George,' replied Clara, ' that is our little Lucy's friend, whom you have heard her speak so much about. That must have been Uncle Giles. Where did you see him ? '

' In the church.'

' In the church ? ' she said, with a questioning and half-amused air. ' Why, your father has vainly besought him to go to church, but could never succeed with him. The man is evidently decent, and is well behaved ; but he has some mysterious scruple as to going to church. He is altogether a good bit of a mystery to everybody.' And she went on to tell her husband the story of his coming among them.

George listened attentively, and then proceeded to tell of the repetition that day of the Cairo dream, and what he had afterwards seen and heard in the church.

Clara, who had at first treated the matter somewhat lightly, was now in turn much impressed by what she heard.

' Why, do you know,' she said, ' the first time I saw the man—it was when he was in a state of delirium—he took me by the hand and called me Esther. I never mentioned it before to any one.'

' Well, and what of that ? ' queried her husband.

' What of that ? ' repeated Clara. ' Esther was my mother's name.'

' Oh ! ' exclaimed George, in a tone between wonder and curiosity. Then, after a pause, he added : ' And does no one know who the man is ? '

' Nobody, more than I have told you.'

' Then, Clara, you and I must find out. Put on your bonnet ; we must seek him at once.'

They walked down the garden-path together in the direction of Lawrence Dale's house. The cottage which Giles inhabited was adjoining the garden wall, and was approached by a greenhouse, through the door of which you could see the entrance. This being Saturday afternoon, and work suspended, Lawrence Dale and a few other villagers were seated on the bench outside the door. Among these was Giles, who, on his way from the church, had been intercepted by two or three lads with a request that he would arrange some fishing-tackle for them. He was now busied with this, and at the same time listening to what Lawrence was reading aloud from a newspaper. Both the miller and his wife came originally from Yorkshire, and the paper was apparently one sent to them by old friends.

Clara drew her husband back a little. Mrs Dale was evidently one of the listeners too, for they could hear her voice inside the cottage door, as from time to time some news of particular importance would call for an exchange of opinion between her and her husband.

"Ah, Milly!" cried Lawrence, "hark thee to this. Sarah Dobson ha' married Jem Metcalfe after all. It's here in black and white. Did thou ever hear the like?"

"Oh, indeed," replied Milly; "that *be* news. Why, how she did flout that young man o' hers, to be sure! "Happen," she would say, "lads shall be so scarce thou will ha' to seek them wiv a candle, ere I marry Jem Metcalfe." Yet she ha' took him at the last. Well, well!"

Lawrence scarcely heeded Milly's concluding comments, for something of apparently more engrossing interest had attracted his attention in the paper, and he read a few lines to himself as if by way of tasting its flavour before offering it to the others. "It's put in big type, anyway," he said at length; "it must be something worth reading." And without further exordium he proceeded.

STRANGE DISCOVERY.—At the *White Horse Inn*, about three miles from this town, a somewhat singular discovery was made a few days ago. Some changes were being effected in the interior arrangements of that long-established and popular hostel, when, in the course of the operations, the workmen had occasion to lift the flooring of the Blue Room. While doing so, one of them found under the floor, close to the wall on the west side, a gold watch, which appeared, from the dust that had gathered round it, to have lain there for a long time. A piece of thin silver chain was attached to it; and on the outer case of the watch was an engraved monogram. Inside the case was a paper bearing that the watch had been cleaned and repaired by the firm of Lessing & Jobson, of this town, more than a quarter of a century ago. Upon inquiry being made of this firm, they found from their books that the watch had belonged to a gentleman of the name of Arthur Naseby, which agreed with the monogram "A. N." on the back of the watch. This discovery has excited much interest in the town, as our older readers will remember the somewhat extraordinary disappearance from our midst of the gentleman above named. A great deal of mystery surrounded the whole affair;

but it was believed by many, after his disappearance, that the name by which the owner of the watch was known here was not his real name. We refrain at present from entering into details that might be painful to some of his friends who may still be alive among us; but we may mention that there was some reason, from what transpired after his disappearance, for thinking that his real name was Norham, and that he was connected with an ancient and aristocratic family in the north of England. What gave additional mystery to the disappearance of this young gentleman, was, that he had only been about a year married, and was much respected and beloved within the circle of his acquaintance.

When Clara and her husband had first come within sight of the group, and heard Lawrence, in his loud, slow, drawling Yorkshire voice, ponderously retailing the news of the day, it was more from a feeling of amusement than any other motive that Clara waited and listened. But as he continued to read, a deeper interest was awakened in her. From where she stood, she could see Uncle Giles seated on the bench, and was astonished at the extraordinary expression which his countenance assumed at the mention of the finding of the watch. The blood entirely deserted his face, and he let the tackle on which he was working fall from his hands as if he had been struck with paralysis. Captain Norham saw this also, and watched his wife's demeanour with something of alarm. As Lawrence read on, her eyes gradually developed a look of strained attention, as though every word he uttered went deep down into her very soul. A strange pallor overspread her face; she reached out her hands and clasped with a feverish grip at the back of a garden chair that stood near by, as if her limbs were no longer able to support her; then, as the reader concluded, she uttered a stifled shriek, and fainted away.

Her husband caught her in his arms as she was about to fall. Her cry brought Lawrence Dale and the others to her help, and she was carried back to the vicarage.

In the confusion that followed upon Clara's cry of distress, the movements of the old man Giles were unobserved. When the reading of the newspaper was ended by that sudden cry, the little group before the cottage was suddenly scattered; whereupon he immediately rose and entered his house. He was ghastly pale, and trembled like a man in an ague fever. A sharp fire burned in his eyes, and he clutched at the wall for support as he went.

"It ha' coomed at last," he muttered. "Be thou ever so fleet o' foot, the vengeance o' God is fletter."

He did not sit down, or tarry for a moment; but going to where he had thrown his packed valise the evening before, he lifted it up, and taking a staff from the wall, quitted the house.

He walked off, at first slowly, but, as he regained composure, at an increasing pace, going directly towards the Old Grange. He was about to enter the familiar door, when he hesitated, and looked as if he would turn away without entering. There were voices within, and this startled him in a strange way. Yet what was there to fear? The men inside were only workmen, every one of

whom he knew, busily engaged in completing some repairs upon the old place. He might easily pass up the tall stairs to his own quarters without being seen. Yet still he hesitated. At length he said : 'It must be done, whether they see me or not. I cannot make my way with never a penny in my purse.'

He ascended the long stairs with slow and cautious foot. When he had reached the top floor, he unlocked a drawer near his bench, and took therefrom a little box which contained a few silver coins. Putting them in his pocket, he was about to leave the room, when he observed, just where the evening sun streamed warmly in through the dusky pane, the little maid Lucy lying asleep beside her playthings.

'Ah, thou here!' he said in a low voice, that had a perceptible quiver in it. He approached, and bent down over the sleeping child. 'I see it all, my little Lucy. Thou ha' been seeking Uncle Giles, and a-waiting for him till thou ha' fallen asleep.' And as he touched her fair tresses, his first impulse was to raise her up and carry her home—as at other times he would have done. But he dared not do this now. It might frustrate in some way his departure, and he *must* go. She was safe enough; her nurse was sure to seek and find her here.

Lifting a pair of scissors from the miscellaneous gathering of tools upon the bench, he raised one of the shining locks of the sleeping child, and cut off part of it; then taking from his breast that same little leather case we have before seen, he placed the tress inside, and turned to go. But once more he came back and looked at the child, with something pensive and touching in his eyes. 'God bless thee,' he said, 'and keep thee! May thou sometimes think on old Uncle Giles when he be far away.' Then he began to descend the stairs—slowly, with groping hands, and a great mist in his eyes.

He had soon left the valley behind, and was ascending the hill-road by which, only a few months before, he had first entered Linlaven. At the outset he walked quickly, as if dreading observation or interruption; but as he entered the solitude of the broad Fell, he went upward with slow and yet slower steps, turning from time to time to gaze on the village below. The place never looked to him more beautiful than now, under the splendid effulgence of the summer sunset, with the level light gleaming along the mere, and wrapping the high church-tower in a golden glory. All the hills around were bathed in the yellow light; and far beyond he could see the mountains of Westmoreland rising up dark against the kindling west, their broken and serrated ridges gleaming like massive jewels through the soft purple haze.

It could be seen that various and strong emotions had taken possession of the man's soul. 'For nigh thirty years I ha' fled from my fate, yet it dogs my footsteps as I ha' seen a bloodhound nose the track of a slave.' Yet still he passed upwards, heedless more and more of his surroundings. The wild thyme and the bright-eyed tormentil were at his feet, and around him was the sweet scent of the pines; but they had no charm, because they had no existence, for him. Once over the brow of the Fell, with village and lake and church-tower all hidden from his sight,

he sat down on the heath, and gave vent to his misery in tears. Here, among these scenes, he had for a time been tranquil—almost happy; and now, driven forth by the exigencies of his own blighted existence, he must leave them, and for ever. For thirty years, as he numbered it, had he fled before the slow foot of retribution; and yet, here, among those wilds, was not Nemesis coming up with him at last?

Sitting there—the moor-birds circling with wild screams round his head, and then darting away with a warning cry—he took no note of time. Suddenly he was aroused out of his reverie by a quick sound that struck upon his ears. It was the bells of Linlaven!

Why should these bells be ringing now? Was it the curse? No; for they were ringing out in tones harsh and angry. Never, surely, during the three centuries since our Lady of Langleydale brought over these bells from Holland, and hung them in the gray church-tower of Linlaven—never had they given forth such clamorous and discordant music. The man started to his feet, and stood for a brief moment listening to that wild alarm, re-echoing and reverberating among the hills.

'It must be fire,' he said, as he turned and ran towards the ridge he had just crossed, and from which Linlaven could be seen. The bells sounded out with a still more angry and dissonant clangour as he came within sight of the valley. The sun had already left it; but the twilight was yet clear along the lake, and he could see a dark cloud of smoke floating ominously in the calm air.

'It is fire!' he exclaimed. 'And,' in a horrified whisper, as he looked again, 'it is the Old Grange! And Lucy—my little Lucy—what if they ha' not found her? Oh God,' he cried, in a voice of agony—'must yet another sin be laid to my charge?' And as he uttered these words he rushed madly down the hill towards the village, dashing onwards with all the recklessness and energy of despair.

ON MAN-EATING REPTILES.

BY DR ARTHUR STRADLING, C.M.Z.S., &c.

THE popular concept of a reptile embodies the very presentment and incarnation of that which is hurtful, repulsive, and, above all, aggressive. Serpents are endowed with venom to enable them to wreak destruction on the human and every other race with which they are brought into contact, or—under the most charitable ascription—are provided with the same 'as a means of self-defence.' Crocodiles and alligators are always on the chase for man, if they do not prey exclusively upon him; and the minor members of the scaly tribe are regarded with a vague sense of disfavour, grounded, no doubt, on that involuntary antipathy which lies outside the province of reason or the will, but capable, nevertheless, of entertaining any evidence as to their misdeeds with a preconceived readiness to believe it.

Still, the vast majority of reptiles may safely be pronounced to be innocuous to human beings, poisonous snakes of course constituting one, and

much the greatest, exception. It would be foreign to the purpose of this paper to recapitulate the terrible records of death from the bite of these creatures in India; and in our consideration of reptiles likely to regard us from a dietic point of view, we may dismiss in their entirety two of the four great orders of reptiles, the lizards and the chelonians. Of the former, there are no bigger existing representatives than the monitors of Africa, India, Malaysia, and Australia, attaining a length of seven feet, fierce in their resentment of interference, and capable of inflicting a nasty wound with their iron teeth, but credited with no more sensationalfeat than that of occasionally devouring young crocodiles on the Nile; while most certainly the beak of no tortoise or turtle now living on this earth could do more than exhaust its powers for evil in an awkward pinch.

In connection with the question of man-eating, habitual or casual, we have therefore left to us among reptiles of the present day only the crocodilians and pythonoid snakes; and with regard to the former, unhappily their capability admits of no dispute. From every part of the world where these creatures are found, we gather accounts, only too well authenticated, of human beings carried off and devoured by them. It is said that crocodiles kill more people annually in Africa than all the rest of the wild animals of that continent together; but then, the destruction of life by beasts of prey is not very great in Africa compared with what obtains in many other countries. Indeed, it is just possible that the homicidal propensities of alligators and crocodiles, while by no means a fiction, may have been slightly over-rated. At anyrate, I have spent a considerable part of my life in various reptile-ridden countries where the rivers, tanks, and lagoons teemed with these brutes, so potent for good and ill, and have made it my business to hunt up and inquire into cases of the sort; but I have everywhere found those in which definite evidence was forthcoming very few and far between, though in many instances persons had disappeared in such a manner as to suggest a fair inference that they had come by their death in this way. On the other hand, I have seen numerous severe injuries, obviously inflicted by huge crocodilians, limbs crushed and mangled so as even to require amputation, as well as many slighter lacerations, where yet the sufferer, in spite of being so terribly mauled, has been allowed to escape by his assailant. Such cases used to be not at all uncommon amongst the coolies on the cane-pieces in Guiana, where the whole country is intersected by 'canals,' trenches of muddy water which effectually concealed the ragged jaws lurking beneath the surface; and this is the more curious, seeing that animals once seized rarely if ever escape, even powerful cattle.

Much more difficult to answer is the query, Do snakes eat men? It is hardly necessary to say that the greater *Boidae*, the anacondas of tropical America, the reticulated python and rock-snake of the East Indies, and the African

pythons, some half-dozen species in all, can alone be taken into account in discussing this matter, as no others are of sufficient size to admit of their swallowing a human being. No serpent masticates or in any way subdivides its prey; whatever it takes in the shape of food it must bolt whole and entire; and this peculiarity excludes from our present consideration all the venomous snakes—none of which grow to more formidable dimensions than a length of twelve or fourteen feet at most, with the girth of a man's wrist—as well as the rank and file of the colubrine snakes and smaller constrictors. The boas, which seem to be regarded popularly as synonymous with all that is biggest in the serpent world, are comparatively small reptiles, of exceedingly beautiful coloration, confined to South and Central America, where a specimen of ten feet would be considered worthy of remark.

I believe we have no evidence whatever to justify us in assuming that these snakes are man-eaters, and that there is not a single authenticated instance of the sort on record. One cannot, of course, deny that the constrictors which I have specified as the giants of their race may, and frequently do, attain such a size as would render them quite capable of the deglutition of an adult human being. The anaconda falls not far short of forty feet in the hot swamps of Brazil and the Isthmus; the West African python has been measured dead at thirty-three; while there is a reticulated python in the London Zoological Gardens the length of which is estimated at twenty-six feet. No live snake can be measured with accuracy, because, big or small, it is never seen in a straight line; curiously enough, and probably for the same reason, it always appears very much shorter than it really proves to be when the tape is applied to its dead body, or to its shed slough if cast unbroken. That such monsters as these could swallow men admits of no doubt whatever, any more than that they do occasionally in their wild state feed on deer and other large game. Within a few inches of my pen as I write is a royal python, the smallest species, about five feet long. Two hours ago it ate a dead chicken, half-grown, yet its neck is scarcely thicker than the penultimate joint of my thumb, and has to accommodate spine, muscles, nerves, blood-vessels, windpipe, and many other structures besides the gutlet. But I am persuaded that the most gigantic of serpents does not, in its native haunts, habitually take the large prey with which it is credited, and I know that in captivity they thrive infinitely better and live longer if fed on relatively small objects. The anaconda or rock-snake, whose size would permit the constriction and deglutition of an antelope, would probably be found to feed by choice on animals corresponding to rabbits and ducks, though he might affect heavier morsels if hard pressed; small fur and feather, however, would always be the more plentiful and more readily obtained.

There are two stock anecdotes, and only two, which are invariably quoted by writers who contend for the anthropophagous habit, and one of those anecdotes is nearly a hundred years old. One is that related by M. Gironière, in his *Twenty Years in the Philippines*, concerning a murderer,

who had been apprehended by the authorities, but who had succeeded in eluding their vigilance, and, escaping, had hidden himself in a cavern, where his father supplied him with the necessities of life. On going to the cave one day with rice, he discovered a huge boa (python?) asleep, while the fugitive from justice was nowhere to be seen. He killed the serpent, and found the body of his son within it. The other is an account given in the *Bombay Courier* of August 31, 1799, to the effect that a Malay proa, making for the port of Amboyna, missed her daylight off Celebes, and anchored there for the night. One of her sailors went on shore to collect betel-nuts in the forest, and, as was afterwards surmised, lay down to sleep on the sea-shore. Cries for help were heard by the crew during the night and they at once put off to the island, where they found the Malay crushed to death by an immense snake, which was preparing to swallow him. But the shouting for assistance is a fatal bar to our accepting the story; no more inconceivably sudden death can befall man or beast than would result from the onslaught of a giant constrictor.

I was present at the post-mortem examination of the body of the unfortunate man Karoli, who was squeezed to death by a python eighteen or twenty feet long in Malrid some years ago. He was performing with the creature wound about him when he chanced to vex it in some way; the brute tightened on him, and with a gasp he fell on the stage. The audience applauded, thinking it was part of the play, but the *dompteur* was dead. And we found no fewer than eighty-seven fractures of the bones; while lungs, liver, and intestines were split across, all in that one swift, silent, terrible embrace. Squeezed, did I say? *Smashed* would more fitly convey an idea of what these great reptiles can effect by their sinews of supplest steel; there could be no crying out for aid, nor could aid be of any avail in such a case. Two of my own ribs were broken by a Natal python, the 'bight' of whose body gripped my side to an extent scarcely more than I can span with my hand. It is remarkable, however, that although many of these snakes are very savage in captivity, and will inflict even serious lacerations by biting, they seem never to put forth their constrictive force as a means of defence or for any other purpose than that of feeding, unless they are held or restrained in some way. A fierce serpent will dash at a fancied aggressor open-mouthed over and over again—I have had my clothes ripped off me by an anaconda which had got loose in a small room—yet they never seem to remember the power of their lateral muscles until they feel themselves grasped.

A most circumstantial narrative of a man-eating serpent in Trinidad appeared in the *Port-of-Spain Gazette* on March 30, 1889, and was extensively copied by newspapers throughout the world, an account so free from the gross exaggeration which characterises most of these stories as to render it apparently worthy of credence. It set forth that on the previous Sunday morning the inhabitants of Arima—district in the interior of the island—were thrown into a state of consternation by the news that three children had disappeared from the Ward of Guanapo during the past week. The names and residence of these children were given, as well as those of

every one concerned in the matter, down to the minutest corroborative details. Later in the day came the intelligence from Aripo that two more children had been lost, the one on Saturday and the other that same morning; further, that the mother had actually been the terror-stricken eyewitness of the capture of the second by a colossal snake, which had glided off with its victim into the depths of the forest.

A number of inhabitants quickly banded themselves together with the avowed object of destroying the fiend. Dogs were employed, and an attempt was made to track the serpent by scent, without success. The wildest rumours as to its dimensions and crimes began to prevail; but misrepresentation was modestly deprecated, and the length assessed at fifty feet. On the following Tuesday, frenzy was wrought to its highest pitch by a report, subsequently confirmed, that the anaconda had appeared on the heights, and that two more children had been carried off by him. A hunter had fired two charges of shot into him, the only result of which was to hasten his retreat in the direction of the Morne Bleu Mountains. The warden now thought the news so serious as to induce him to request assistance from the capital, and the Colonial Secretary accordingly despatched a sergeant and six policemen, armed with Martini-Henry rifles, by the afternoon train to Arima, as the guns which the majority of the pursuers carried did not seem to possess sufficient penetrating power to effect the slaughter of an animal endowed with more than feline plurality of lives. At six the next morning a motley cavalcade issued forth towards the Guacharo Caves in the Morne Bleu, where the monster had been 'marked down' on the previous evening; and here he was found and slain with a dramatic environment of the most picturesque horrors.

The search-party proceeded into one of the caverns as far as the light of day penetrated, walking with noiseless footsteps through a gloom and silence broken only by the sound of a distant waterfall and the mournful cry of the mountain birds. Suddenly their progress was arrested by a deep black pool of water, hardly to be discerned in the dim twilight. The dogs began to howl, and in a few moments they beheld, with vision now accustomed to the obscurity, the huge head of the snake rise above the inky surface, its eyes lighted with a diabolical gleam as it glared at the intruders. The next moment a hiss seethed forth from its jaws, as though a red-hot beam had been plunged in the water. A deafening volley rang out from the levelled guns, displacing large masses of stone overhead, which actually wounded some of the party. This, however, did not give the Minotaur his quietus, for, rearing himself twenty feet on high, and rapidly uncoiling his length from the depths of the pool, he launched himself forward, with his body bent in a great curve, on his assailants. A second discharge, however, produced the desired effect; the snake leaped out of the pool, and lashing the floor and the surface of the water, died in terrific convulsions. He was found to measure forty-seven feet, with a diameter of two and a half, the described colour accurately indicating an anaconda. Opened on the spot by the knives of some cocoa-pruners, it was found that

all traces of the children had disappeared ; but the half-digested body of a deer, probably swallowed on the previous day, was disentombed, along with a number of official papers, conjecturally the relics of some unhappy overseer. The carcass of the serpent was then skinned, and the bones extracted for exhibition in the Council Hall of Port-of-Spain.

No contradiction of this extraordinary story seems to have reached any of the European or American papers which had quoted it ; but my friend Dr Knox, of San Fernando, sent me the sequel. A couple of days after the publication of the narrative, crowds of people from far and near came flocking in to the Council Hall to view the hide and skeleton of this Brobdingnagian reptile, that being the date fixed for its arrival—only to find that the whole affair was a hoax, and to be reminded that the day was the first of April !

Quite recently a well-known venomous snake, the hamadryad (*Ophiophagus elaps*), has been amplified into a man-eater in certain forests of Ganjam, where, it is declared by the Khonds and Uriyas, who hold it in such dread that nothing will induce them to enter some of the woods, to attain a length of thirty feet, and to add not only human beings—which it is said to pursue with relentless activity—but jackals, wolves, leopards, and sambur to its normal diet of snakes.

In conclusion, let me give two possible instances as they were given to me of serpents devouring very young children. A friend of mine, whose *bona fides* I could not for one moment doubt, a man well known in the world of science, though not a zoologist, assured me that he had seen the tiny dead body of a newborn baby seized by a snake as it lay exposed on the steps of a church in a remote village of Southern Italy. He had passed the spot but a few minutes before, when the screams of a boy caused him to retrace his steps, and then he perceived a large striped serpent, which had plunged its widely distended jaws over the naked shoulder of the child. Sticks and stones caused it to loosen its hold, and it flashed away into the bushes. The biggest of the European snakes, the beautiful four-rayed *Elaphis*, is certainly found in that locality, but it grows to no more than six feet, and is of slender habit. My friend did not profess to have noted the appearance of the reptile sufficiently to enable him to describe it.

The other story comes from Manila. When I was there, many years ago, there was a poor crazy *mestiza*, or half-breed, who was quite a noted character in the island. She lived in one of the Tagal huts outside the city on the muddy Pasig River, but was not unfrequently to be met in the canopied side-walks of the streets, or wandering along the *calzada* in the evening, when that beautiful drive and promenade is thronged with carriages and pedestrians, enjoying the strains of the military band and the sea-breeze. This woman was a withered, shrivelled creature, who might have been sixty, seventy, or a hundred years old ; but it was currently reported—and I can well believe it—that she was little more than thirty. Her wants were sufficiently provided for, and a certain amount of supervision was exercised over her movements ; but every

now and then she escaped from a not very stringent control, and roamed through the length and breadth of Luzon, usually returning of her own accord after an absence of weeks, or even months, though occasionally rescued and brought back by those who encountered her and knew her.

Her one passion in life and the object of her wanderings was to catch snakes. These she would seize upon unhesitatingly wherever she met with them—and probably few knew their haunts better than she—and would keep them twisted about her, tied with plaited grass to her wrists or around her neck, or folded in the hem of her scanty *saya*, where she would talk to them, scold them, beat them, caress them, according to her mood, all day long, until they succeeded in regaining their freedom. On more than one occasion she had returned thus decorated to the Indian quarter, causing no little consternation ; and it was even said that she had been responsible for a general stampede from the great Chinese store in the Calle Escolta, the Regent Street of Manila, by appearing at one of the doorways chattering to a huge poisonous snake. I was conducted to her hut by a Dominican friar who had described to me a serpent which he had recently seen in her hands, and which seemed to me to be a specimen of the rare and deadly *Ophiophagus*. Our tedious journey up the bewildering maze of fetid creeks which extend away to the base of the mountains was, however, fruitless, for neither *mestiza* nor snake was to be found in the nipa-thatched tenement. I learned from the friar that one of her arms, one leg, and her jaw had been broken by falls in the course of her snake-hunting rambles, and had remained permanently deformed from the want of surgical treatment ; but that she was not known to have been bitten by any of the ill-omened protégés she handled so unceremoniously.

Concerning this woman I was told a tale of horror. True or false, no one in Manila appeared to question its accuracy. At the age of fifteen, when she was an exceedingly beautiful girl, she married a Spaniard high in office in the port, a member of one of the old 'Peninsular' families, who found it hard to forgive such a *mésalliance*. (This, I may remark, would possibly account for her position at the time of my visit, watched and cared for to a certain extent by an ample provision of money, but a pariah none the less.) A few weeks after the birth of her first child, she was taken, for the sake of her health, to a *quinta* or villa in the mountains, to escape the excessive heat and noisome smells of the city and low-lying foreshore, her husband's official duties compelling him to remain at their residence in the town. One afternoon she was sitting in a low rocking-chair, placed in a shady corner of the veranda which ran round two sides of the *quinta*, commanding an extensive view of the glorious bay far below ; her Indian maid lay asleep on the floor, and she, with the baby, now a month old, in her lap, presently succumbed to the heat of the day, and slept too—slept long and heavily. She heard no sound ; she was disturbed by no movement ; but she woke suddenly, to find her baby gone, and an enormous python lying *gorged* at her feet. As she sprang from the chair, the snake struck her on the breast, inflicting a jagged

wound, the scar of which I saw, then sped off down the hill-side. With a wild cry, the poor creature fell to the ground, mercifully bereft of reason from that moment.

HOW THE ACREAGE RETURNS ARE OBTAINED.

In September 1889 a Board of Agriculture was established in England for the first time. It took over the powers formerly exercised by the Agricultural Department of the Privy-council, and those of the Land Commission relating to tithes, commons, and the enclosure of lands. Its duties include the following matters: Contagious cattle diseases, injurious insects, the collection and preparation of statistics on agriculture and forestry, and the promotion of lectures and instruction on such subjects. The Board consists of the President, or Minister of Agriculture; the Lord President of the Council; the Secretaries of State for the Foreign, War, Home, and Colonial Departments; the First Lord of the Treasury; the Chancellor of the Exchequer; the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; the Secretary for Scotland, and such other persons as the Queen may from time to time appoint. One of the principal, if not the principal, duties of the Board is the preparation of the yearly 'blue-book'—it is, however, sometimes slate-coloured—containing the Agricultural Returns of Great Britain. These Returns have now been furnished for twenty-six years, and £15,300 was annually voted for their cost. The collection of the statistics has always been entrusted to the officers of the Excise branch of the Inland Revenue Department, who have until this year been paid for the extra work thus devolving on them, about ten thousand pounds being divided among the various officials concerned. The remuneration has now been withdrawn.

The particulars of the acreage of the land under cultivation for crops; the quantity of meadow, fallow, and moorland; the number of cattle, sheep, pigs, and horses of various kinds, poultry, and silos, are ascertained in the following manner. About the end of May each year, a form containing headed columns for all the items of information desired is sent by post by the local revenue officer to all persons whose names appear in the parish ratebooks as occupiers of land above a quarter of an acre in extent. These schedules are stamped, and addressed for return. After a few days, the officers proceed to write to or call upon such occupiers as have failed to make the required Returns, and endeavour to persuade them to fill up their papers or give verbally the necessary details. In the event of non-compliance, the particulars are obtained roughly from some friendly resident in the parish; or, in the absence of such assistance, the officer himself makes an estimate of the crops and live-stock on the farm or holding.

The difficulties of the collection have always been great, and have not much diminished as the

years have progressed; indeed, the inaccuracies are as great and as many as ever. In the Returns for 1889 the number estimated was stated to be 18,832 out of a total of 574,840 Returns; but there is no doubt that a much larger number—probably sixty per cent.—have to be amended, and partially, if not wholly, estimated, owing to various causes. The forms issued are of a very complicated nature, and well calculated to puzzle the agricultural mind, which, as John Bright once observed, is not very enlightened. Parish overseers sometimes put obstacles in the way of the collecting officials, to delay and prevent them revising their list of land occupants by the ratebooks. It is entirely optional whether farmers and others fill up their Returns—there is no compulsion—only solicitation at present, though there is some talk of making the next Returns compulsory. In cases where the Returns are made, the forms are frequently so carelessly filled up that it is necessary for the officers to make additions or deductions in order to make the total average agree with that of the previous year. This operation is known as 'cooking' the Returns.

Another serious fact which retards the officials is that they have no right to go upon the land of a farmer to determine his crops and stock, and irate agriculturists have been known to threaten to set their dogs on too persistent officers. The thousands of prosecutions that take place all over the country for keeping dogs and carriages, killing game, carrying or using guns, &c., without licenses, and other violations of the revenue laws, render the officers unpopular with the very persons whose Returns they are requesting. An occupier of land after he has been fined will refuse to fill up an optional Return. The Returns were at first regarded, and still are by some, as preliminary to some dark scheme for future taxation, and by many as a partial check upon their income-tax declarations.

It is a matter of difficulty to the occupant of a large farm to give, even approximately, the number of acres under each crop, if he honestly desired to do so; it is therefore evident that it is impossible for officers with no special knowledge of agricultural matters, and frequently fresh from cities, to arrive at a reliable conclusion as to the crops and stock on a farm upon which they are not permitted to go, and of the boundaries of which they are ignorant. These Returns are required at a busy portion of the year, and are in addition to and unconnected with the other multifarious duties of revenue officials. Even if they were authorised to make personal inspection of the holdings of non-returning occupiers, it is doubtful whether many officers would have time to do so. The large number of Returns that require 'correction,' and holdings that have to be guessed at or estimates manufactured, are included in the totals with the Returns that profess to be correct, making the whole inaccurate, and thus of less value as a basis for the arguments, conclusions, and calculations regarding them which appear every year in the leading journals. The Board of Inland Revenue and the Board of Agriculture are aware of these defects in the Returns, and number among their advisers officials who have been through every grade of their service, to whom the difficulties

referred to are matters of actual knowledge. Moreover, year after year, in the columns of the Civil Service papers, have appeared letters from the collecting officers showing how impossible it is under the present conditions to obtain trustworthy Returns. It is apparent, too, under the circumstances mentioned, how hard it is for those concerned in their collection to obtain entirely correct Returns; and in order to get the work completed in the few weeks allowed much 'revision' of the schedules is inevitable.

In their anxiety, under the official pressure put upon them, to show as few 'estimates' as possible, the officers sometimes overstep the mark, and resort to expedients which bring down upon them punishment in the shape of dismissal, reduction in rank, and censures. This has, unfortunately for them, been especially the case over the last Returns, the punishments being exceptionally numerous and severe. The schedules sent out are often treated with scant respect by the recipients, being regarded as an objectionable inquisition, for which the Prime Minister who may be in power is responsible. Some contemptuously tear up the forms sent them, the fragments being found scattered about adjoining lanes, blown by every wandering wind. In other cases, instead of the information requested, ridiculous answers and satirical queries are freely scrawled on the forms. Instead of the extent of the land planted, '10,000 cabbages' will be returned. 'How is the G.O.M.?' one will humorously inquire. Another will ask, 'What is the price of jam?'—'If you want to know the number of my chucks, come and count them' was endorsed on one form. A farmer's wife offered an officer chalk to mark the hens and chicks, as she could not tell their number 'to a hundred one way or the other.' The little pig that ran about so that he could not be counted has numerous parallels. Occasionally, some hitherto 'mute inglorious Milton' will 'drop,' like Silas Wegg, 'into poetry.' Here is a specimen of a rhyming Return, actually sent to one of the officers by a rural intellect of more than ordinary brightness and waggery :

Ten acres of wheat; no barley or bere;
Eight acres of oats; rye (corn) ? none here.
Of beans, peas, and 'taters,' I grow just a score,
And of turnips and mangolds about six or more,
Though of swedes I must tell you I have not a pole,
As the wireworms have paid their 'devours' to the whole.
Of carrots? let's see—I think there is one.
Cabbage? Not planted. Kohl-rabi not sown.
Rape? Well, not guilty. Beetroot enter nil.
Chicory—vetches or tares—no true bill.
To lucerne I'm a stranger; I sing not its praise;
But green crops such as rhubarb just one rood I raise.
Of flax not a yard; of hops not a pole;
Of fallow ploughed acres, I've four on the whole.
Of hay-crop—I've just got a score in the park.
Though of other grass land I could not sod a lark.
Working horses there's four, of cattle eleven,
Sheep I have none, but of grunters I've seven.
Of silos? What nonsense to come to that pass,
The man who stacks ensilage I think him an ass.
The last-mentioned quadruped, sometimes call'd a moke,
I'm not to return, so forgive me the joke;
I know of a pair, sir, the compliment's double,
You for your patience, I for my trouble.

To the non-agricultural reader it may be explained that 'bere' is a light sort of Scotch

barley; 'kohl-rabi' and 'rape' are a species of green crop, and 'lucerne' an artificial grass for cattle.

Their employment in the collection of agricultural Returns is termed by the officers being 'on the acreage'; and in the days when there was a duty on malt instead of beer, it was a pleasurable duty roaming among villages and farmhouses on horseback or cycle, in dogcarts, or on that 'fiery and untamed steed' known as 'shanks' pony.' In the bright and pleasant summer-time the malt houses were always 'silent'—that is, closed, and the revenue officials had little to do in the rare June days. Now, however, all is changed, and the collection is regarded as an undesirable addition to their already heavy work. Various propositions for an alteration in the method of collection have been made. All agree that the Returns should be compulsory, with a fine for non-compliance or incorrect Returns. A simpler form of schedule, more suited to the understanding of Hodge, is also deemed necessary. It has been proposed, too, that the work of collection should be undertaken by the parish overseers, the police, or the postmen. A reform of the system prevailing is manifestly urgently required, and cannot come too soon, in the interests alike of agriculturists, revenue officials, and the public.

BALLADE OF ROSES AND THORNS.

THE month that brings the Summer heat
Unfolds the buds that filled in May;
The red flow of the morn is sweet,
And sweeter is the ebb of day.
So fair the pleasant land's array,
So deep the joy on every side,
That men forget this ancient lay,
'The roses pass, the thorns abide.'

Though hidden in a sure retreat,
The roses' blushes soon betray
Their secret, and the thorns that meet
Around them cannot once affray
The plunderer who seeks such prey,
For he will pluck them, and in pride
Upon his breast will wear the spray
Where roses pass, but thorns abide.

Alas! the hours have flying feet,
And Pleasure will not deign to stay
For anything that maids entreat,
For anything that men can say.
To sigh and prayer she answers 'Nay.'
All for her going must provide,
Or they will find to their dismay
That roses pass, but thorns abide.

ENVY.

Princes, pluck roses on your way,
Though under thorns the roses hide;
Yet think ye on my rhyme, I pray—
'The roses pass, the thorns abide.'

J. T. LEVENS.

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